

## New York Times – Pre-Paywall Survey

Dear New York Times Reader:

This brief survey asks about your views of the New York Times. This research is being conducted by researchers at Columbia University and is not sponsored by or affiliated with the NY Times in any way.

Please note that participation is voluntary and you can choose to stop participating at any point. The survey should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and help with this effort. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to send us an email at: [NYTimes.survey@gmail.com](mailto:NYTimes.survey@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
Shahzeen Attari and Jonathan Cook  
Columbia University

Press the "Next" button below to get started!

**1. How frequently do you visit the New York Times website ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))?**

- Several times per day
- Once a day
- Several times per week
- Once a week
- Several times per month
- Less than once per month
- Hardly ever

**2. How much do you value the New York Times in each of the following categories?**

Response options:

Not at all (1), Somewhat (2), Moderately (3), Very much (4)

- News
- Opinion
- Information (such as reviews, travel, stocks)

**3. Did you know that beginning March 28, 2011, the New York Times will begin introducing digital subscriptions to readers in the United States (i.e., charging for frequent access to online content)?**

- Yes
- No

The pay structure for a digital subscription is as follows:

On NYTimes.com, you can view 20 articles each month at no charge (including slide shows, videos and other features). After 20 articles, you will be asked to become a digital subscriber. The following rate plans are available:

1. NYtimes.com + Smartphone App: Unlimited access to NYTimes.com and the NYTimes smartphone app: \$15 every four weeks
2. NYtimes.com + Tablet App: Unlimited access to NYTimes.com and the NYTimes tablet app: \$20 every four weeks
3. All Digital Access: Unlimited access to NYTimes.com and the NYTimes tablet and smartphone apps: \$35 every four weeks

**4. Do you plan to purchase a digital subscription plan in the next 3 months?**

- Yes, I have already paid for it
- Yes, I plan to pay for it
- No, I plan not to pay for it
- No, I have a paper subscription that provides online access
- Not sure

*Question 5 (below) was answered only if participants selected either, “Yes, I have already paid for it” or, “Yes, I plan to pay for it” to the question, “Do you plan to purchase a digital subscription plan in the next 3 months?”*

**5. Which subscription do you plan to purchase or have you already purchased?**

- \$15 every four weeks plan
- \$20 every four weeks plan
- \$35 every four weeks plan

*Question 6 (below) was answered only if participants selected either, “No, I plan not to pay for it” or, “Not sure” to the question, “Do you plan to purchase a digital subscription plan in the next 3 months?”*

**6. In the next 3 months, how do you think you will respond to the introduction of digital subscriptions? (check all that apply)**

- Use a gift subscription
- Stay within the 20 article limit
- Use built in "loop holes" (like using multiple computers or viewing articles through other websites)
- Initiate a print subscription that provides online access as part of the subscription
- Retain a print subscription that provides online access as part of the subscription
- Use someone else's subscription
- Stop reading the news
- Switch to another news source (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- Not sure yet

*Question 7 (below) was only answered only if participants selected either, “Yes, I plan to pay for it” or, “No, I plan not to pay for it” to the question, “Do you plan to purchase a digital subscription plan in the next 3 months?”*

**7. How certain are you of your upcoming response to the pay structure?**

- Not at all certain
- Somewhat certain
- Very certain

**8. How would you rate the price the NY Times will charge for access?**

- Very inexpensive
- Inexpensive
- About right
- Expensive
- Very expensive

*Question 9 (below) was answered only if participants selected either, “No, I plan not to pay for it” or, “Not sure” to the question, “Do you plan to purchase a digital subscription plan in the next 3 months?”*

**9. Listed below are reasons why people may not be willing to pay for digital subscriptions to the NY Times. Please read each statement and indicate how much each statement applies to you.**

Response options:

Not at all true (1), Somewhat true (2), Moderately true (3), Very true (4)

- I cannot afford it
- I do not want to pay for it on principle
- Other free news sources are available that are just as good
- The print home delivery option seems best

**10. Listed below are various statements about the new digital subscription policy by the NY Times. Please read each statement and indicate your agreement.**

Response options:

Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)

- Charging for access is the right thing to do for a valuable resource like the NY Times
- Charging for access will leave out lower income readers
- Charging for access will leave out younger readers
- Charging for access will leave out older readers
- Charging for access will cause the NY Times readership to become less diverse
- Charging for access will cause the news content to improve
- Charging for access will cause the news content to worsen
- Charging for access will provide more resources to journalists
- Charging for access will cause voices of disagreement to be left out
- Charging for access will contribute to news becoming polarized
- Charging for access will mean less advertising is displayed
- Charging access will spur other news organizations to start charging for online access
- If the NY Times does not charge for access, they will go out of business

**11. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_**

**12. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**13. Please indicate your highest level of education.**

- Some schooling, but no diploma or degree
- High school diploma or GED
- Some college/Associate's degree
- College degree
- Some graduate school
- Graduate degree

**14. During 2010, what was your yearly income before tax? Your best estimate is fine.**

- Did not have an income
- Less than \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$109,999
- \$110,000 - \$139,999
- \$140,000 - \$169,999
- More than \$170,000
- Prefer not to answer

**15. How would you describe your political beliefs?**

- Extremely liberal
- Liberal
- Slightly liberal
- Moderate
- Slightly conservative
- Conservative
- Extremely conservative

**16. Do you live in the United States?**

- Yes. Please enter zip code below. \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Please enter your email address so that we can contact you for a short follow-up survey after the digital subscription policy is implemented. Your email address will be treated with strict confidentiality and not shared with anyone else. We will delete your email from the information you provide after the follow-up survey.

**17. Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Do you have any comments you would like to share with us?**

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## New York Times – Post-Paywall Survey

Dear New York Times Reader:

Thank you for completing the first part of this survey as the New York Times (NY Times) made the switch to digital subscriptions. The questions in this survey ask about your behaviors and opinions now that digital subscriptions have been implemented. This study is not sponsored by or affiliated with the NY Times and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Columbia University. We value your privacy. Email addresses are separated from responses and will never be given to any third party. They will be deleted upon completion of this research.

Participation is voluntary and should only take around 5 minutes. You can choose to stop participating at any point. Thank you for your help with this effort. If you have any questions, please contact us: [NYTimes.survey@gmail.com](mailto:NYTimes.survey@gmail.com)

Sincerely,

Dr. Shahzeen Attari and Dr. Jonathan Cook  
Columbia University

**1. Since the NY Times implemented the digital subscription plan on March 28, 2011, how frequently have you visited the New York Times website ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))?**

- Several times per day
- Once a day
- Several times per week
- Once a week
- Several times per month
- Less than once per month
- Hardly ever

**2. How much do you value the New York Times in each of the following categories?**

Response options:

Not at all (1), Somewhat (2), Moderately (3), Very much (4)

- News
- Opinion
- Information (such as reviews, travel, stocks)

**3. Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?**

- Yes
- No, I do not have any subscription to the NY Times
- No, I have retained a print subscription that now provides online access
- No, I have purchased a print subscription to gain online access
- I received a free gift subscription

*Question 4 (below) was answered only if participants selected “Yes” on the question, “Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

**4. Which subscription have you purchased? (Please select your plan, even if you are still on the \$0.99 introductory rate)**

- \$15 every four weeks plan
- \$20 every four weeks plan
- \$35 every four weeks plan
- Discounted university rate. Please enter the dollar amount you pay every four weeks: \_\_\_\_\_

*Question 5 (below) was answered only if participants selected “Yes” to the question, “Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

**5. Are you still on the \$0.99 introductory rate?**

- No, I am past the introductory rate (or the introductory rate does not apply).
- Yes, and I plan to continue at the regular rate when the introductory rate is past.
- Yes, but I plan to cancel the subscription before the regular rate goes into effect.



*Question 6 (below) was answered only if participants selected  
“No, I do not have any subscription to the NY Times” or  
“I received a free gift subscription” to the question,  
“Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

**6. How have you responded to the introduction of digital subscriptions? (check all that apply)**

- Use a gift subscription
- Stay within the 20 article limit
- Use built in "loop holes" (like using multiple computers or viewing articles through other websites)
- Initiate a print subscription that provides online access as part of the subscription
- Use someone else's subscription
- Stop reading the news
- Switch to another news source (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- Not sure yet

**7. How would you rate the price the NY Times charges for digital subscriptions? (Ranging from \$15 - \$35 for a four week plan)**

- Very inexpensive
- Inexpensive
- About right
- Expensive
- Very expensive

*Question 8 (below) was answered only if participants selected  
“No, I do not have any subscription to the NY Times”,  
“No, I have purchased a print subscription to gain online access”, or,  
“I received a free gift subscription” to the question,  
“Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

**8. Listed below are reasons why people may not be willing to pay for digital subscriptions to the NY Times. Please read each statement and indicate how much each statement applies to you.**

Response options:

Not at all true (1), Somewhat true (2), Moderately true (3), Very true (4).

- I cannot afford it
- I do not want to pay for it on principle
- Other free news sources are available that are just as good
- The print home delivery option seems best

**9. Listed below are various statements about the new digital subscription policy by the NY Times. Please read each statement and indicate your agreement.**

Response options:

Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5).

- Charging for access is the right thing to do for a valuable resource like the NY Times
- Charging for access will leave out lower income readers
- Charging for access will leave out younger readers
- Charging for access will leave out older readers
- Charging for access will cause the NY Times readership to become less diverse
- Charging for access will cause the news content to improve
- Charging for access will cause the news content to worsen
- Charging for access will provide more resources to journalists
- Charging for access will cause voices of disagreement to be left out
- Charging for access will contribute to news becoming polarized
- Charging for access will mean less advertising is displayed
- Charging access will spur other news organizations to start charging for online access
- If the NY Times does not charge for access, they will go out of business

*Question 10 (below) was answered only if participants selected  
“Yes”,  
“No, I do not have any subscription to the NY Times”,  
“No, I have purchased a print subscription to gain online access”, or,  
“I received a free gift subscription” to the question,  
“Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

**10. How much has the introduction of digital subscriptions affected you?**

- Less than I expected
- About as much as I expected
- More than I expected

*Question 11 (below) was answered only if participants selected  
“Yes”,  
“No, I do not have any subscription to the NY Times”,  
“No, I have purchased a print subscription to gain online access”, or,  
“I received a free gift subscription” to the question,  
“Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

**11. How disappointed are you about the idea of paying for a resource that used to be free?**

- Not at all disappointed
- Somewhat disappointed
- Extremely disappointed

**12. Do you pay for access to other online content?**

- No
- Yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Do you plan to change your response to the NY Times pay structure for online content in the near future?**

- No
- Maybe, please tell us how: \_\_\_\_\_
- Yes, please tell us how: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. How do you think the online readership has changed for the NY Times since digital subscriptions were implemented?**

- Decreased
- Stayed the same
- Increased
- No idea

**15. Do you think loopholes in the NY Times digital subscription plan help people adapt to the change?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Did not know about the loopholes

**16. Do you think the NY Times' digital subscription plan will last for the next three years?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

*The following section and questions were completed only if participants selected “No, I do not have any subscription to the NY Times” or, “I received a free gift subscription” to the question, “Have you purchased a digital subscription plan?”*

*Participants were randomly assigned to one manipulation condition.*

### **Profit Manipulation**

Please read the following:

Revenue from subscriptions has traditionally been a small contributor to newspapers’ bottom line (Grueskin, Seave, & Graves, 2011). This is unlikely to change as more people switch to online news. Data from the NY Times’ most recent quarterly report (May 2011) show that the company made over \$5 million in profit in the quarter. Over the long term, if the NY Times does not implement online subscriptions, the likelihood that it will remain profitable seems high.

### **Bankrupt Manipulation**

Please read the following:

Advertising does not work as well online as in print (Grueskin, Seave, & Graves, 2011). As more people switch to online news, the NY Times will likely lose a vital source of advertising revenue. Data from the NY Times’ most recent quarterly report (May 2011) show that both circulation and advertising revenue have decreased. Over the long-term, if the NY Times does not implement online subscriptions, the likelihood that it will go bankrupt seems high.

**17. How does this information change your support for the NY Times charging for online access?**

- I am less supportive
- My level of support remains the same
- I am more supportive

**18. How does this information change your willingness to purchase a digital subscription in the future?**

- I am less likely to purchase a digital subscription
- My decision remains the same
- I am more likely to purchase a digital subscription

**19. Do you have any comments you would like to share with us?**

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